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THE OUTLOOK FOR FARM FAMILY LIVING FOR 1939

A radio conversation between Miss Ruth Van Deman, Bureau of Home Economics, and Mr. Wallace Kadderly, Office of Information, broadcast Wednesday, November 2, 1938, in the Department of Agriculture period of the National Farm and Home program, by the National Broadcasting Company and a network of 93 associate radio stations.

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WALLACE KADDERLY:

And now looking forward again to 1939. For the last three days we've been giving you the outlook forecasts for next year on certain crops and livestock, and farm labor and credit. In other words different parts of the farm production picture.

Today we're turning to the home side --to the farm family living part of this Outlook situation.

And this isn't so easy to bring down to definite terms. There are many intangibles about family living anywhere - on the farm or in the city - intangibles that can't be measured in dollars and cents, bushels, pounds, or ounces.

But as I think we mentioned last week, the home management specialists from the Extension Service of 30 States have been conferring here in Washington with the Agricultural Economics and Home Economics people in the Department of Agriculture.

This was a working conference. Everybody contributed something - either facts or experience.

Now today Ruth Van Deman is here to give you some of the highlights from that general report. And then we are going to hear from representatives of three of the 30 States that took part in the farm family living outlook conference --- Mrs. Eunice Pardee of Kansas; Miss Jane Ketchen of South Carolina; and Miss Jessie Hinton of Maryland.

So, Ruth Van Deman first, and starting with the national outlook for farm family living for 1939. Ruth what seems to be the keynote, does the future look rosy?

VAN DEMAN:

Well, more rosy than this year's been.

KADDERLY:

That's good to hear.

VAN DEMAN:

There are a number of signs that make it look as though farm families will come out better in 1939 than they're doing this year. Of

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course all of us have been feeling the effects of the general economic sag.

KADDERLY:

Very true. The day has passed when farm people and city people were on opposite ends of an economic seesaw. Differences are flattening out more and more with every year that goes by.

VAN DEMAN:

Now it's more as though we are all in one gigantic nation-size swing. When the country's prosperous, the swing goes up. And when there's a depression, we all take the down-drop pretty much together.

KADDERLY:

There's a perfectly good reason for all of us feeling these "highs" and "lows" about the same time. When farmers get more money for their products, they buy more factory-made goods. And that of course puts more people to work in factories and gives them more money to spend for food and things farmers have to sell.

VAN DEMAN:

Maybe we should have said merry-go-round instead of swing.

KADDERLY:

That might be better.

VAN DEMAN:

Well, anyway, the economists who keep track of these "highs" and "lows" believe that the present pick-up in business and industry will mean more money coming the farmers' way in 1939. And it looks as though the buying power of these farm dollars will be about as much as it's been this year.

KADDERLY:

Prices for the things farm people buy, then, aren't expected to go sky-rocketing.

VAN DEMAN:

Not according to the present forecast. Some things may even be cheaper. And of course some things will probably cost more. Shoes are one of the things they say may go up.

KADDERLY:

And shoes are a pretty big item in a farm family's clothing bill.

VAN DEMAN:

Most decidedly. Farm families have to spend more of their clothing money on shoes and footwear than town and city people do. You remember I gave some very interesting figures here one day from our Consumer Purchases Study. They showed that very clearly.

KADDERLY:

I do remember.

VAN DEMAN:

And they also showed how the automobile's pushing its way right up near the top of the budget for many farm families.

KADDERLY:

Ahead of clothing I think you said in some cases.

VAN DEMAN:

That's right. The old order's being upset. Many farm families spend more on their cars than they do on their clothes. Some put as much as 17 percent of all the cash they spend in a year for living into buying a car and keeping it on the road.

KADDERLY:

But, of course, a farm family has to use a car for business as well as pleasure. It's practically a necessity.

VAN DEMAN:

Oh yes, I'm not questioning that. I'm just mentioning it as a change that's come in the last 15 years. If you're in the market for a new car next year, gasoline prices are expected to stay about "as is". Tires may go up a little.

KADDERLY:

Sorry, I'm not.

VAN DEMAN:

If you were, you'd probably find the 1939 models about 5 percent less than the 1938's. That is on the average. And, please notice, I'm saying may, and probably, and is expected, about all these things.

KADDERLY:

I have noticed. You're being as cautious as the very best economists.

VAN DEMAN:

I'm doing my best to obey orders. The economists can't be too positive about a lot of things. But here's one thing I don't have to qualify.

KADDERLY:

Let's have it.

VAN DEMAN:

It's about the farm family food bill. It's a universal fact that farm families, like city families, spend more of their cash for food than for anything else.

KADDERLY:

That's true, is it, regardless of all the food that goes right from the farm into the kitchen with no cash involved?

VAN DEMAN:

Yes, in spite of all the butter and cream, and milk and eggs, and fruit and vegetables, that farm families raise for their own use, they still

have to spend more of their money for food than anything else. But, of course farm families live better than city and town people. More of the foods they raise are "protective" foods - the kind that safeguard nutrition.

KADDERLY:

But farm people aren't getting such good diets that they can't be improved, surely?

VAN DEMAN:

Not by any means. That's one of the points this Outlook report emphasizes. If more farm families laid better plans at the beginning of the year for producing the foods they need to give them a better-balanced diet, they'd probably be healthier. And they'd certainly have more cash to use for other things.

KADDERLY:

That's not suggesting going back to the old-time self-sustained farm idea, surely, when people raised their own grain and ground their own flour, and so on.

VAN DEMAN:

No, nothing like that. This is a very up-to-date food program that's suggested - Canning by budget, maybe having a cold storage locker in a community refrigerator plant, where fresh foods can be kept fresh.

KADDERLY:

These food storage lockers do seem to be very much on the increase. I believe there are between eight and nine hundred thousand of them in operation now. Of course the families using them pay a service charge.

VAN DEMAN:

And that takes money out of the family budget. And the spread of rural electric power lines is something else that's going to make a difference in what farm families spend their money on.

KADDERLY:

More electric washing machines, no doubt, more pumps to pump running water into the kitchen sink. More electric irons - - -

VAN DEMAN:

And more radios, Wallace, so there can be more listeners to the Farm and Home program.

KADDERLY:

What about furniture and house furnishings?

VAN DEMAN:

They may be a little higher in 1939. This fall manufacturers wouldn't take orders for goods to be delivered next year at this year's prices.

KADDERLY:

You know there is another expense that a family often has to meet - an expense that comes without any warning and makes a situation very hard

to meet financially. That's serious illness and the bills for medical care.

VAN DEMAN:

Yes, I know. At this Outlook conference there was a very interesting report given on what some farm families spend on medical care. It ran all the way from \$22 to \$59 a year.

Somebody at this conference put forward this suggestion. If every one of these families should put a fixed sum, each year, into a common fund for medical care, that would meet the expense for everybody. No family would pay any more in the end. There wouldn't be that worry of being suddenly faced with a big bill for some long serious illness, that makes a drain on savings, or maybe sends the family into the "red" for years to come.

KADDERLY:

Yes. Group health is another of the ideas that many people will probably be turning over in their minds next year (I seem to be getting the probably habit too.)

And, Ruth, I feel almost as though I'd been to a New Year's party, will all this talk about 1939.

VAN DEMAN:

Oh my, don't whiz us past Thanksgiving and Christmas like that.

KADDERLY:

That's right, we haven't carved the Thanksgiving turkey yet. But we will.

VAN DEMAN:

And we've only just sent this Outlook report to the printer. It has to be printed and in the mail bags on its way to Extension people in the States long before New Year's. And I can tell by the way Mrs. Pardee is looking at me that she's just itching to tell how they'll use this Outlook material in Kansas.

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